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Smoking Causes Spring Outdoor Fires

“Improperly discarded smoking materials cause a lot of outdoor fires at this time of year,” said State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan. “Whether it is last year’s dried out mulch, this year’s new mulch, or last year’s dried leaves and grass in the backyard or along the roadside, an improperly disposed of cigarette can start a fire quickly at this time of year,” he added.

“Conditions are perfect right now; the snow pack has receded, we are waiting for new growth to sprout, humidity is low and the days are getting hotter,” said State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan.

Coan said, “We have encouraged many smokers to move outdoors instead of smoking inside for health reasons. However, it is important to have an appropriate container to safely dispose of cigarette butts and ashes.”

“This winter we saw an increase in porch and deck fires from improperly disposed of smoking materials and in the past few weeks we have seen a lot of mulch fires started by smoking materials,” said Coan. “Do not put cigarettes into mulch; it creates the perfect fire triangle – heat, fuel and air.”

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“Businesses that are sprucing up their landscaping should also be careful and provide and maintain a safe receptacle for disposing of smoking materials so that patrons won’t start fires by flicking cigarettes into the mulch,” said Coan.

The U.S. Fire Administration has a new campaign on preventing smoking fires that encourages smokers to “Put It Out. All the Way. Every Time.” Log onto <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/campaigns/smoking/> for more information.

Dispose of cigarettes inside your motor vehicle, do not throw them out the window. Because of the risk of starting a fire, it is illegal to do so and punishable by a fine of \$100 and/or thirty days imprisonment.

In Massachusetts during 2007, 2,063 fires were caused by smoking including: 657 structure fires, 43 motor vehicle fires, 1,097 tree, brush or grass fires, 85 trash or rubbish fires, 132 special outside fires, and 20 cultivated vegetation or crop fires.

For more information on fire safety, look on the Department of Fire Services website at www.mass.gov/dfs under *Fire Safety Topics*.

The mission of the Department of Fire Services is to promote and enhance firefighter safety through policy and training, to assist and support the fire service community in protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Massachusetts, and to provide a presence in the Executive Office of Public Safety in order to direct policy and legislation on all fire related matters.